

INTELLIGENCE REFORM IS STILL NOT DONE

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, the House passed intelligence reform legislation last year, and the bill was another step to strengthen efforts against an enemy bent not on our defeat, but on our destruction. But the conference committee was dominated by those that ignored key recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

The final product was watered down. It did not have a plan to prevent illegal immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses. It did not put in place stricter asylum standards, problems identified by the 9/11 Commission as glaring weaknesses in our Nation's defenses.

Mr. Speaker, 19 of the 9/11 hijackers had 63 driver's licenses between them. How can this Nation in a time of war leave such a glaring hole in our Nation's defenses? Mr. Speaker, this was wrong, and that is why I am hopeful that the legislation introduced this week by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), which I cosponsored which strengthens security standards on driver's licenses and asylum standards, will pass. I hope the Senate and the 9/11 Commission will support our efforts to do so.

GROWING BUDGET CRISIS

(Mr. EMANUEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, in December of 2003, Josh Bolton, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget wrote, "With the adoption of the President's policies, our projections show a solid path toward cutting the deficit in half within the next 5 years."

Fact: this year our deficit will increase for the fourth straight year, to a record \$427 billion. The Webster's dictionary defines a crisis as "an unstable state of affairs." If you are looking for a crisis to solve, look no further. Look at the President's budget deficit.

The President's reckless policies are damaging our Nation's future. Our annual interest payments on the national debt are more than six times what we spent on education last year. They are more than 12 times what we spent on veterans.

What are we doing with this \$7 trillion debt that keeps running up? We are asking our bankers, Japan and China, for more money. They control our future. It is a very fascinating economic strategy.

The President has indicated that his budget will be tough. I agree. With 3 years of record deficit and a record national debt accumulating, it is tough. It is tough on America's future.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the President and the economy, the truth is, we will forever be in his debt.

A STEP TOWARDS LIBERTY IN IRAQ

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, in his second inaugural address just days ago, President George W. Bush restated our Nation's longstanding vision as the beacon of liberty and the arsenal of democracy on planet Earth.

This Sunday, January 30th, because of the leadership of that same Commander in Chief and the courage and sacrifice of our American military and their families, that vision will take one more step forward on Earth with the free elections taking place in the war-torn nation of Iraq.

The Good Book tells us that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. So I know I rise on behalf of millions of Hoosiers when I say to the good people of Iraq, you not only have our sons and daughters and our resources, but you will have our prayers; and our prayers are with all the good people of that nation as they take this small step toward liberty. May it be the beginning of a permanent break with their tyrannical past.

SUPPORT FOR ADVOCATES FOR VETERANS

(Mr. STRICKLAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, our good friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), had served on the Committee on Veterans' Affairs for 24 years. He had been the chairman of that committee for 4 years.

On January 5, representatives of 10 national veterans organizations wrote the gentleman from Illinois (Speaker HASTERT) asking him to keep the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) in that position. But he was removed. And a senior GOP aid referred to these veterans by saying, "If they think coming up here to argue for CHRIS SMITH is going to help CHRIS SMITH, they are crazy."

Well, the Republicans in this House may think the advocates for veterans are crazy, but we Democrats do not; and we will not stand by and let this administration or this House of Representatives decimate VA health care.

PUSH POLL DISCLOSURE ACT OF 2005

(Mr. PETRI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PETRI. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing legislation to increase the disclosure requirements for telephone push polls. My bill, the Push Poll Disclosure Act of 2005, uses the light of

public disclosure to lift the darkness surrounding these smear polls, which are a campaign device to spread disinformation about candidates under the cover of a legitimate poll.

They are not, however, real polls. Their only purpose is to create a negative image among the voting public without leaving a visible trace. My bill combats this obnoxious practice by requiring increased disclosure for polls when more than 1,200 households are included.

The time has come to regulate smear polls for what they are, a campaign tactic, and make those who employ this tactic take full responsibility for their actions.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

EXPRESSING CONCERNS OVER IRAQ ELECTIONS

(Mr. KUCINICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, today I am sending a letter to Secretary-Designate Rice and Ambassador Negroponte expressing concerns over the Iraq elections that are to take place in just 5 days.

It will be impossible to determine the extent to which corruption, voter intimidation or outright fraud will mar the results. Here is why: there is a total absence of international election observers for the process. As such, it will make the elections themselves, regrettably, a farce.

International observers were present at polling sites in Nigeria, East Timor, Haiti, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Ukraine. Iraq is the first so-called transitional election in the past 2 decades that will not have international election observers touring polling stations. Instead, Iraq will have a "mission," which will assess the elections from Amman, Jordan, inspecting the Iraq elections from Amman, Jordan.

This is not acceptable, to stage an election that cannot be monitored for fairness, where it cannot be independently determined whether ballot boxes are being stuffed.

EXPRESSING AWE AND ADMIRATION FOR IRAQI PEOPLE

(Mr. CHOCOLA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHOCOLA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the fact that this Sunday, January 30, will be a truly historic day, a day when the Iraqi people, once oppressed and without a voice, will cast their vote in their nation's first democratic elections. It is an amazing fact when you think that just 2 years ago they suffered under a brutal dictatorship.

There is no question that the desperate tactics and deliberate attacks

will increase in the final days leading up to the election. But in spite of the efforts of those that hate freedom, the elections will take place; and it will begin a new period in Iraq's history, a beginning that will lead to freely elected leaders, a national assembly and a constitution founded on freedom and equal rights.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues and the people of this great country to join me in awe and admiration for the Iraqi people as they show the world the power of liberty and their determination to forge a path towards lasting freedom.

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IN RECOGNITION OF CARL AND FRANCINE DEMMA

(Mr. LIPINSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an outstanding labor of love and faith in my district.

Carl Demma of Oak Lawn had a vision nearly 20 years ago of expressing his Catholic faith by creating a larger-than-life statue of the Virgin Mary. His goal was to encourage people to reflect on their religious faith at the beginning of the new millennium. Mr. Demma's vision was realized in a 33-foot-tall statue of the Virgin Mary. Our Lady of the New Millennium was blessed by Pope John Paul II in 1998, and, since that time, hundreds of thousands of the faithful have been able to view the statue.

Since Carl passed on in 2000, his beloved wife Francine has dedicated her time and energy to ensuring that the statue continues to be transported from parish to parish for all the faithful to experience.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud Mr. and Mrs. Demma for their dedication and their many years of service to the community.

PROTECTING AND PRESERVING SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, in the year 2018, Social Security will start paying out more money than it is bringing in. In the years 2035 to 2042, somewhere in that range, it will be out of money, and it will force a benefit cut of 27 percent.

Now, that is not a burning crisis today, but it is a slow-burning problem that we in the U.S. Congress need to address. We should do it with a couple of parameters: that we are not going to cut the benefits, we are not going to increase taxes, we are not going to change Social Security for retirees or near retirees. But we should act responsibly in a bipartisan manner to

protect and preserve Social Security and not use it for our advantage in the next election, but come up with long-term solutions for the next generation.

I invite my Democrat colleagues to come in with their ideas. And I would say to Independents and conservatives and liberals alike, let us put these ideas on the table, let us address this situation together in a bipartisan fashion, and let us do it for the sake of my parents, my dad is 87, my mom is 80; and for your parents; and also, again, for the next generation.

PRESERVING SAFETY NET FOR SOCIAL SECURITY, AND CAUTIOUS DELIBERATION NEEDED REGARDING NEXT STEPS IN IRAQ

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would be quite interested in accepting my good friend's challenge on Social Security, but let me say to my colleagues, the proposed plans of Republicans are an absolute betrayal of the American people and the safety net of Social Security, and I, for one, and those of us who stand under the Democratic umbrella, are not going to stand around while Social Security is being destroyed. Social Security is secure until 2053, and we need to make sure that that safety net remains in place.

Mr. Speaker, I also rise to acknowledge the 35 marines that lost their lives this morning in Iraq. I, too, believe in freedom, as most Americans believe in freedom, but I do also believe in truth. As Secretary-to-be Condoleezza Rice will be approved today, I hope that we recognize in this Congress that we have an obligation not to political philosophy, but to the lives of those young men and women on the front lines.

Iraq may be able to be a democracy as we know it in decades and decades to come, but what do we say about the blood of Americans who came to fight a war in Iraq on the basis of weapons of mass destruction? I believe we owe them an apology, and I believe that we owe cautious deliberations on the next steps in Iraq.

MORE FUNDING AND ATTENTION TO SECURE OUR PORTS

(Ms. HARRIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, our Nation has made tremendous strides in securing our homeland since the 9/11 attacks. Americans have performed amazingly well in staying alert and aware, while the Federal Government has done an excellent job in making travel safer for airline passengers.

Nevertheless, our achievements merely highlight how much more work

remains. Before we can truly be safe, we must direct more funding and attention to securing our ports.

America's seaports have become the locomotives of economic growth, receiving 95 percent of our Nation's imports. Florida alone has 14 deepwater seaports, and 56 percent of all of our imported oil comes through the Gulf of Mexico border region. Thus, terrorists know what devastating death and destruction would be wrought through the detonation of one dirty bomb in one cargo container, which would bring international commerce to a screeching halt.

We spend a great deal of time debating how to secure our land border. We must start devoting the same amount of time and energy to the security of our water border, starting today. Through the Gulf of Mexico States Caucus, we will work to ensure that the House accomplishes this goal.

RESIST GIVING IN TO FEAR: TRUST SOCIAL SECURITY

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Mr. Speaker, Social Security is a program that is both financially sound and essential to the lives of our seniors. Social Security provides the core retirement benefits for over 30 million retirees, and nearly half of the elderly would live below the poverty line without it.

According to the Board of Trustees, of which four out of six were appointed by President Bush, Social Security is as healthy today as it has ever been. Their 2004 report says that the program can pay all benefits through 2042. After that, even without any changes, they could continue to pay benefits.

The administration is ignoring these facts, deceiving the public, and creating force, hoping to force privatization of Social Security. This deceitful approach that this administration has chosen to wage war on its working Americans is typical of them. They create fear, and then they offer their only solution, one that suits their political goals, not the goals of the people, to whatever crisis they have conjured.

To the people of this country, I say, do not give in to fear. Trust a program with a surplus over a President that created a huge deficit.

TIME TO ABANDON RISKY SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION SCHEME

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this week we had another reality check on how fiscally devastating Republican fiscal policies are on our Nation. Yesterday the Bush administration announced that the budget deficit is set